

OXFORD
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The David Patterson Lectures

Week 5

Professor Hindy Najman
(Oriel College/Theology & Religion)

Scriptural Vitality: Rethinking Philology and Hermeneutics

Hindy Najman is the Oriel and Laing Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture in the faculty of Theology and Religion. Najman is also a faculty member of AMES and a member of the sub faculty of Classics. She is the founder and director of the Study of the Bible at Oriel College. She is a supernumerary fellow on the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. Previously she held positions at Yale University (2010-2015), the University of Toronto (2004-2010), where she was the Director of the Centre for Jewish Studies, and the University of Notre Dame (1998-2004), where she was the Jordan Kapson Chair of Jewish Studies. Her publications have focused on the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Judaism, especially on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Hellenistic Jewish writings, with a particular focus on Philo of Alexandria, as well as Rabbinic Literature and Pseudepigrapha. Najman's work rethinks central categories in Philological scholarship, including author function, textuality, the fragment, subjecthood, plurilingualism, and composition. She has authored the following books: *Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future: An Analysis of 4 Ezra* (CUP, 2014); *Past Renewals: Interpretive Authority, Renewed Revelation and the Quest for Perfection* (Brill, 2010); *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (Brill, 2003) and her forthcoming book *Scriptural Vitality* will appear later this year in the Oxford University Press series, *The Bible and the Humanities*.

Abstract: Scriptural Vitality challenges the view that the Persian and Hellenistic periods constitute a time of decay, a period of "late Judaism," languishing between an original, vibrant Judaism and the birth of Christianity. Instead, this lecture argues that the Second Temple period was one of untethered creativity and poetic imagination, of dynamism exemplified through philosophical translation, poetic composition, and a convergence of ancient Mediterranean cultures that gave birth to hermeneutic innovation. Building on Nietzsche's critique of classical philology, and drawing in new ways on the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the lecture carries out a radical rethinking of biblical studies. Instead of seeking to reconstruct the original text and to find its original author or at least the original context of its production, Najman celebrates textual pluriformity and transformation, tracing ways in which texts and meanings proliferated within interpretive communities through new performances and fresh articulations of the past. Engaging with thinkers such as Friedrich Schlegel and Peter Szondi, whom biblicists have rarely considered, biblical philology is reimagined as the forward-moving study of the poetic processes by which Jewish communities re-created their past and revitalized their present. The Second Temple period emerges as a golden age of creativity, whose traces may still be discerned in Judaism and Christianity today.

Thursday, 23 May 2024

6–7 pm (UK time)

This lecture will be a hybrid session which will be accessible both online (see below) and in person in the Catherine Lewis Lecture Theatre.

No need to register if attending in person.

In order to participate in this lecture online, please register at this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcvde6sqTorHdWZYsY2A2sHOvvJiuKgg->

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ALL WELCOME

